COLCHESTER BOARD OF EDUCATION
Colchester, CT

BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, January 6, 2022
BOE Budget Committee Meeting 9:00 AM
Virtual Meeting via Zoom

MINUTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Jessica Morozowich, Marguerite Gignac, Donna Antonacci

ADMINISTRATION PRESENT: Superintendent Jeffrey Burt, CFO Maggie Cosgrove, Director of Digital Learning and Innovation Darren Smith, Director of Pupil Services and Special Education Kathleen Perry, and Director of Facilities Mario Hurtado

OTHERS PRESENT: Executive Assistant to the Superintendent Heather Petit

1. CALL TO ORDER

1.1 Call to Order

Chair Morozowich called the meeting to order at 9:01 AM

2. ADDITIONS TO AGENDA

Superintendent Burt asked to add three items to the agenda: 5.3 Contract Tracing Positions, 5.4 Finance Office Reorganization, and 7.2 Update on 2022-2023 Budget

Motion by: Marguerite Gignac
To approve the addition of agenda items 5.3, 5.4 and 7.2.
Second by: Jessica Morozowich
Vote: Unanimous
Role Call: Donna Antonacci, Marguerite Gignac, Jessica Morozowich

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

3.1 Public Comment

None.

4. *APPROVAL OF MINUTES

4.1 Approval of December 2, 2021 Minutes

Motion by: Marguerite Gignac
To approve the minutes of the December 2, 2021 Budget Committee Meeting
Second by: Donna Antonacci
Vote: Unanimous

Roll call: Jessica Morozowich, Donna Antonacci, Marguerite Gignac

Chair Morozowich asked that the November 2021 Budget Committee Minutes be put on the agenda for approval at the February meeting.

5. *PRIORITY DISCUSSION/ACTION ITEMS

5.1 *Wireless Project Bid Approval

Director of Digital Learning and Innovations Darren Smith discussed the importance of updating the aging wireless system in the district. The update would include all of the buildings in the district. A survey was conducted which helped determine where wireless access is low and areas it is still needed throughout the buildings. Three different vendors bid on the wireless project. Insight was the best pricing with labor through EASTCONN for a total bid of $191,583and is consortium pricing. Marguerite Gignac inquired about the much lower cost difference between this bid and other submissions and if this meant a significant difference in outcomes. Mr. Smith said that there is no difference in outcomes nor in quality. Mr. Smith stated the plan is to have this ordered by the end of January as there is often a 4-6 month lead time. The goal is to have this in place by the end of the summer in time for next school year.This project will be paid through the ARPA grant.

Motion by: Donna Antonacci

To approve the recommendation of the wireless project bid for Insight/EASTCONN and forward to the full board for approval.

Second by: Marguerite Gignac

Vote: Unanimous

Roll call: Jessica Morozwich, Donna Antonacci, Marguerite Gignac

5.2 Raptor Emergency Management System

Superintendent Burt discussed the Raptor system and potential utilization of the Raptor app going forward. The district currently utilizes Raptor in all school buildings for immediate background checks. Raptor also provides an app that works in concert with Powerschool that he would like to purchase. With the app, every single staff member would have the ability to call a lockdown. Notification immediately goes out to all staff as well as an immediate notification to emergency personnel including 911. The Raptor app also assists in reunification of students and families in a crisis situation. The app has incredible flexibility and also assists in lockdown drills. In addition, the app includes an attendance and visitor system. The initial implementation cost is $6,400 with a recurring cost of $7,200. This school year the cost would be less as it would be prorated. Chair Morozowich asked if there is any issue with teachers having this on their phones and also with the district phone system, as it is antiquated. Superintendent Burt said this app circumvents the schools' phone systems. In regard to staff access, the discussion is being had with Administrators as to whether or not it would be mandated for all staff and any implications that might entail; however, the app itself is secure and there is no issue to have it on staffs' personal devices. All committee members agreed with going forward with the app.

5.3 Contract Tracer Positions

Superintendent Burt said that the Board had approved Contract Tracer positions recently; however, the state has since updated their guidance concerning contact tracing. Superintendent Burt said he would like to instead use that funding to continue to fund staff who are working with students who are quarantined for 5 days. These staff help with distance learning management; gathering schoolwork and resources for families whose child(ren) is/are in quarantine. The funding would primarily come from the ARPA grant.

5.4 Finance Office Reorganization

Superintendent Burt discussed finance office reorganization. CFO Cosgrove will be retiring in June. The Deputy CFO also recently left and most recently learned that the Benefits/Payroll Coordinator took a position outside the district. Due to the combination of Town/Board of Education positions, there is a potential challenge to fill these positions. Superintendent Burt said in the reorganization we would have our own Finance Director, accountant, and a position to help with benefits which would fall under Human Resources. The payroll/accounts payable positions would remain shared. Superintendent Burt said it is difficult to be competitive on the open market with combined positions for Town and Board of Education. He recently met with the First Selectman to discuss these changes as well. Superintendent Burt would like the Board to have its own finance department. Superintendent Burt estimates it will be an increase of approximately $60,000 to make these changes. He stated that we pay for a portion of these positions already so it would be a matter of reallocating most of the funding. Superintendent Burt said the overall reorganization will significantly increase the district's capacity and capabilities. Superintendent Burt stated that compared to other districts, Colchester is woefully understaffed. Chair Morozowich agreed and had similar concerns with filling shared positions.

Chair Morozowich recommended a comparison between staffing at Colchester and other districts as well as a description of CFO duties be brought to the board at the next meeting.

6. BUDGET REPORTS

6.1 Monthly Budget Reports

CFO Cosgrove presented the December 2021 budget report. CFO Cosgrove stated most of the information is in line with where the district was in November.

6.2 Cafeteria Fund

CFO Cosgrove presented the November 2021 Cafeteria Financial Report. CFO Cosgrove said that the cafeteria fund is going in a good direction. The current reimbursement funding from the government has eliminated prior year concerns. CFO Cosgrove and Superintendent Burt discussed recent staff challenges in Food Services. Chair Morozowich asked that they let the Board know if there is any way they can help.

6.3 Health Insurance Reserve

CFO Cosgrove shared the November 2021 Health Insurance Reserve report and stated that the report continues to reflect positive information. The district has remained steady overall. CFO Cosgrove had a meeting with Lockton and they explained why premiums continue to rise. CFO Cosgrove gave an overview of the contract with Lockton who is based out of Farmington. The district pays a flat fee for their services.

6.4 Special Education Excess Cost Report

Director of Pupil Services and Special Education Kathy Perry said that this is the first month all funds and forecasts are in. Ms. Perry said there were no new out placements of students since the last report. Ms. Perry said currently the Board of Education deficit between tuition and transportation is $14,750.89 which is a loss due to the state cap of 77%. Ms. Perry said this may change month-to-month based on service changes.

6.5 Use of Schools

None at this time.

6.6 Capital Reserve

None at this time.

6.7 Budget Transfers Under $5,000

None at this time.

7. OLD BUSINESS

7.1 Update on Federal Grants

Superintendent Burt gave an update on federal grants. Superintendent Burt said there have been some small changes since ARPA was brought forward last summer. He will provide more detail on those changes at the February meeting.

Superintendent Burt had a nice conversation with the Agriculture Commission on the farm to school grant and they will present to the Board on Tuesday.

7.2 Update on 2022-2023 Budget

Superintendent Burt said he will be meeting with Principals and Directors next week on the 2022-2023 budget. He stated that currently there are 10 sections of Kindergarten that will be moving up to First Grade. The district may need to keep 10 sections in Kindergarten if enrollment trends continue. In addition, there are preschool and social worker positions that are grant-funded that are planned to be moved back into the budget. As positions were taken out of the budget for the grants, the savings from those moves were put into the end of year funds. As the grants run out, there is a need to put them back into the budget. Superintendent Burt stated that these positions that were put in place are key to ensure the district can continue with needed social emotional and academic support.

8. *NEW BUSINESS

None.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT ON NEW ISSUES RAISED OR SUBJECTS DEVELOPED

9.1 Public Comment

None.

10. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 10:08 AM